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**The Report Committee for Jennifer L. Haldeman  
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

**Does Parental Involvement Increase Student Achievement? How, Why,  
and for Whom?**

**APPROVED BY  
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

**Supervisor:**

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Cynthia Osborne

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Christopher King

**Does Parental Involvement Increase Student Achievement? How, Why,  
and for Whom?**

**by**

**Jennifer L. Haldeman, B.A.**

**Report**

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## **Abstract**

# **Does Parental Involvement Increase Student Achievement? How, Why, and for Whom?**

Jennifer L. Haldeman, M.P.Aff

The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

Supervisor: Cynthia Osborne

Increasing the amount and quality of parental involvement as a means of increasing student achievement has been an important policy focus for the last half century, and is especially true today as the United States is faced with an increasingly diverse student body in its public school system. This report examines what parental involvement and student achievement are, the impact of parental involvement, which groups receive the most impact, and factors that affect parental involvement. The focus is the elementary school level, using literacy level as the primary means of student achievement. Of particular interest are schools with diverse student populations that tend to be linguistically diverse and are identified under the federal Title I program. Current research indicates a positive relationship between parental involvement and its effect on student achievement. The most important factor for quality parental involvement that

results in improved student achievement is not the type of activity, but how interaction occurs and the intensity level. Parental involvement programs should provide targeted activities that are curriculum related and culturally sound; they must also have the capacity to be practically implemented in the increasingly busy lives of parents and students. While current studies do support this relationship, parental involvement operates within a complex web of interrelated contexts; further quantitative research using more experimental methods and controlled studies could provide results that would strengthen the evidence of using parental involvement as a policy or program choice for increasing student achievement. Policy recommendations are directed primarily at school teachers and administration. Those recommendations are to 1) ensure a welcoming environment through invitations by teachers and students; 2) increase parental self-efficacy; 3) develop extended family resources; 4) highlight the different avenues of parental involvement; 5) allow time for teachers to plan and develop relationships; and 6) ask the parents.

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## **Introduction**

A child may see his or her teacher for more hours in the day than his or her parents. This is especially true for elementary students who have the same teacher for the entire day. Child, teacher, parent: these three groups represent the three-legged stool that determines whether or not a child becomes successful in his or her academic achievement. The relationship between student and teacher is well documented on how they must work together for success, but the exact influence of the involvement of the parent in the academic arena is not quite so well-defined, although it is widely acknowledged that parent involvement is of the utmost importance. This is evident from the emphasis placed on parent involvement at the federal level of the U.S. government. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has said that “one thing is absolutely essential-and that’s parent involvement” for success in education.<sup>i</sup> Parent involvement as a way to increase academic achievement for students is an initiative that the federal government emphasizes, especially for students at-risk. In May 2010, the Department of Education stated that it wanted to double the amount of money allotted for family involvement and also to allow federal money to be utilized at the state level to find the best ideas locally on family involvement.<sup>ii</sup>

It is not just a federal priority; the federal emphasis clearly advocates for the local importance of parental involvement ideas. Many states have parental involvement laws, districts have parental support offices, and every teacher knows the importance and influence of the parents on a child’s success. This is clearly a pertinent policy emphasis

within the education policy area in relation to student's academic achievement. The overall goal is academic achievement with increased parental involvement the chosen toolbox. However, does increased parental involvement increase academic achievement? Why and for whom? If it does increase academic achievement, how can parental involvement be increased and improved? These are the questions that will be examined in this report.

## **REPORT ORGANIZATION**

The first chapter provides information on source and study selection for this report, discusses reasoning behind the choice of parental involvement and student achievement as a policy focus, and elaborates on the definitions of both parental involvement and student achievement. It concludes with the lens through which both are viewed for analysis and recommendations.

Chapter 2 focuses on analyzing whether or not parental involvement has an impact on student achievement. Parental involvement is established as an important issue for analysis by drawing on its inclusion historically and currently in policy. An analysis of how much of a difference involvement makes for student achievement in general is followed by a look at different groups of students. Followed is a discussion on quality versus quantity on different types of activities. The types of activities are generally divided as school-based or home-based in most studies.

Chapter 3 discusses different factors that affect parental involvement. The first part gives quantitative parental involvement data drawn primarily from surveys from the U.S. Department of Education, based on ethnicity, income level, and parental education level. Then a section examines different factors that can be either negative or positive,

depending upon the circumstances. These are 1) every day family demands; 2) education level; 3) language and culture; 4) school environment and welcome; and 5) self-efficacy and parental education experience.

Chapter 4 focuses on the school as the primary source of implementation. Two descriptions of different parental involvement programs follow, one that is very parent driven and the other that is implemented from the district level. These descriptions serve as a concrete example of many of the issues analyzed in previous chapters. The chapter concludes with recommendations and thoughts for future research and analysis. This professional report recommends several different actions, focusing on the elementary level implementation by teachers and school administration. The recommendations are to ensure a welcoming environment through invitation, increase parental self-efficacy, develop extended family resources, highlight the many different options for involvement, allow staff time to plan for and develop strong relationships with family, and ask parents what they want and need.

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

Although parental involvement and academic achievement are issues of interest to a variety of stakeholders ranging from the federal government to the individual families, this policy report is not addressed to all of the entities. In order to make recommendations that are actionable and of practical interest, the discussion and recommendations are primarily directed at school districts, individual schools and their personnel. The reason for this is that while parental involvement is of high interest to the federal and state government and academics, the actual level of implementation must be at the local and personal relationship level, beginning with the relationship between

teachers and parents. Federal and state laws provide a framework within which districts and individual schools will operate, but at its core, the effect of parental involvement on a student's academic achievement is determined by each individual relationship developed with the school and teachers. Therefore, policy recommendations at the conclusion of the discussion are directed at school personnel and teachers.

The primary focus of this report is on parental involvement and its impact on student achievement at the elementary school level, grades prekindergarten through fifth grade. Of particular interest are schools that traditionally have lower parental involvement, such as Title I schools. While the stakeholders are all levels of education, and society in general, as such, the most important stakeholders that would be interested in this report would be elementary school teachers and administration, particularly personnel that work at schools where parental involvement and participation is low.

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<sup>i</sup>Speech given on August 3, 2010 by Arne Duncan. The power of the Parent Voice: secretary Arne Duncan's Remarks at the office of the Special Education Programs (OSEP) Leadership Mega Conference. <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/power-parent-voice-secretary-aren-duncans-remarks-office-sp....> Accessed October 13, 2010.

<sup>ii</sup> Press release on May 5, 2010. "Department Proposes Doubling Federal Funding for Parental Engagement." Accessed October 13, 2010 at <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2020/05/05052010.html>.

## **Chapter 1: Framework and Methods**

At first glance the concepts of parental involvement and student achievement seem straightforward and self-explanatory; however, there are many different definitions of both terms. Many stakeholders use different definitions and focus on specific aspects for their own uses. This chapter elaborates on source selection and method of evaluation. The following portion examines why parental involvement and student achievement are important and how each concept is defined by different authors and investigators. Finally, the definitions utilized for this report are given to provide a better framework of understanding.

### **METHODOLOGY AND STUDY SELECTION**

This report is an analysis of the impact of parental involvement on student achievement, how much of an impact it actually makes, and the factors that determine the best ways parents can be involved with their children. Primary analysis is derived from different research studies and publications in the form of an extended literacy review. This is supplemented with two descriptions of parental involvement programs.

The majority of the studies and data sources were obtained from a reference list synthesis compiled by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Two of the publications related to this subject matter were *A New Wave of Evidence - The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, published in 2002, and *The School-Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture: A Review of Current Literature*, published in 2008. These two sources contain summaries of many different

studies, which were then used to obtain the original published articles and studies. For the 2002 publication, studies published within a past 8 or 9 year time frame (1993 to 2002) were considered, and were only included if the following criteria were met:

1. Sound methodology: experimental, quasi-experimental, or correlational design with statistical controls. For qualitative studies, such as case studies, we looked for sound theory, objective observation, and thorough design.
2. Study findings that matched the data collected and conclusions that were consistent with the findings.<sup>i</sup>

The 2008 publication began with a search over many different sources, from indexed databases to the internet. Then the studies were narrowed down to recent publication from 2005 to 2008. After studies were identified, they were chosen for inclusion in the review based on whether or not they aligned to the question being asked and if they used sound methodology in their investigations.<sup>ii</sup> They reviewed the studies using the standards set forth by the National Research Council to assure that they met sound methodology guidelines.<sup>iii</sup> For a more rigorous standard, the studies were examined using standards from the Institute for Education Sciences (IES). The studies take place over many contexts, and only 3 of the studies met their guidelines for strongest “possible evidence.”<sup>iv</sup> Although the rest of the studies did not meet the more rigorous standard, they met the criteria of the National Research Council. The studies chosen for inclusion in this report were ones that primarily examined elementary school levels and parental involvement, as opposed to community connections. They were qualitative research,

correlational studies, and literature reviews. For more information on the studies most utilized in the report, see the appendix.

## **IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE**

### ***Why academic achievement?***

Academic achievement of students is an important issue because how well students perform in schools is an important indicator of future life success. The attainment in education plays a large part in determining one's employment, level of income, health, housing, and many other factors in life.<sup>v</sup> In fact, "every young American pays a cost when a young person leaves school without a diploma."<sup>vi</sup> This is especially true given the economic climate of the past several years in the United States, and even more so in 2010. In 2008, 54 percent of individuals without a high school degree between the ages of 16 and 24 were jobless, compared with 32 percent of high school graduates of the same age.<sup>vii</sup> Low academic achievement can determine the chances of getting into and completing college. In the same study, for individuals of the same age who have a college degree, only 13 percent were unemployed in 2008.<sup>viii</sup> These statistics were even grimmer for minorities, and the figures have climbed since the economy dipped further in 2009.<sup>ix</sup> In fact, low educational attainment in the form of not completing high school will cost the U.S. \$292,000 dollars for every high school dropout over their lifetime, according to a recent study.<sup>x</sup>

Low academic achievement does not only result in students dropping out of high school. A student may graduate high school and not be able to get into a college or a different program of education to further his or her education. In general incomes are lower for those that have lower academic achievement, which translates into many areas



of life. One of the key facets of academic achievement is high literacy skills, the ability to read and write, analyze and draw on resources in the written form. Literacy, if not obtained early, tends to create a widening gap reflected in student achievement, resulting in difficulty in finding employment that is rewarding; students are “effectively prevented from drawing on the power of education to improve and enrich their lives.”<sup>xi</sup> Individuals with academic success have been shown to have a higher likelihood of having health care and being healthier, less likelihood to commit crimes or be incarcerated, are more charitable and productive, and tend to have higher self esteem.<sup>xii</sup> Clearly academic achievement is an important focus, cutting a clear path to future success in many arenas.

### ***Why parental involvement?***

Many different elements go into determining the academic achievement of students at all levels of schooling, and no one variable is the determining factor. The amount of money put into schools, class size, background of the student, teacher pay and experience, and parental involvement all influence the academic achievement of students individually and as a group. Many of these aspects have been thoroughly investigated by many different entities, but parent involvement has not received as much attention. As Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated in a speech to the Mom Congress on May 3, 2010, “there is surprisingly little research...to show what works and doesn’t work in family engagement programs to accelerate student learning.”<sup>xiii</sup> Yet there is strong belief that parental involvement does have a positive impact on student achievement. Not only is the federal Department of Education advocating for parental involvement, but 39 states and the District of Columbia have statutes requiring development of family engagement policies by the school district, school board, or individual schools.<sup>xiv</sup> While the idea of

parental involvement and its importance is not new, there have been so many different parental involvement policy directives from the federal government in the past 45 years since the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, that it can be considered a “parade” of policies. And these policies have not been shown to make a positive difference on student achievement.<sup>xv</sup> But there is a renewed interest in using parental involvement as one of the lens of improving student achievement.

## **DEFINING THE TERMS**

In order to examine student achievement through parental involvement, it is important to understand what each term means within this context. Academic achievement of students is how well students perform in an academic setting, but exactly what measures are used for academic achievement differ depending upon the study and the academic level of the students. In the same vein, parental involvement can mean different things; terms that have also been used in a similar way are parental engagement and family involvement. Each one is a variation of the other that represents similar ideas with different individuals and intensity levels. Below is an examination of different definitions of student academic achievement and parental involvement in order to provide a better base of common understanding and language.

### ***Parental involvement***

The definition of parental involvement seems self-explanatory; it is the parents of a student being involved in the academic or school life of their child. However it is not that simple. While every definition does address how parents interact with their children, many different avenues for this interaction exist, as well as many different nuances that become important when the goal emphasized in current policy is to develop parent and

family engagement programs that are effective and have an impact on student achievement. Those very nuances and slight differences that seem to not matter are actually what could make the difference between a program being successful and not having a measurable result. Even the term used to describe the focus of a program can conjure different images and connotations. Parents and family are used interchangeably, as are involvement and engagement. The difference may appear to be one of exchanging one synonym for the other, but it is much more. Each word has a different scope and intensity.

What is the difference between involvement and engagement? When using the term involvement, it usually signifies that someone is participating in an activity, which in the traditional realm of parental involvement includes back-to-school nights and parent teacher conferences. Engagement implies not only involvement but a drive to be an active participant, a more intense commitment than mere involvement. On the other hand, engagement is sometimes referred to as the sparking of interest on a particular topic, while the involvement is what follows after parents or family is engaged. Whichever term is utilized, the essential step is elaborating upon those definitions to provide more substantial details.

Parents are generally considered the ones with primary responsibility for their children, i.e. Mom and Dad. Family is generally considered the entire “family unit” that traditionally resides together under the same roof, and typically are blood relations. In today’s society of many different family structures, family arrangements range from the typical Mom and Dad with kids to extended family, or parents living in different houses. As the economy has worsened over the past several years, many houses include more

than one family that may or may not be related. The concept of family and responsibility also varies greatly based on the home culture of the parents. As with engagement versus involvement, the use of parents versus family comes down to the details of the definition.

One of the most widely utilized definitions of family (parental) involvement was developed by Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at John's Hopkins University Center for Family, School, and Community Partnerships. This framework of parental involvement defines six types of involvement, detailed in the table on the following page. Many different studies and articles either use this framework, or base their own definitions upon these six types of involvement. The six types of involvement, defined in the table below, are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.<sup>xvi</sup> While this framework is widely utilized to better understand parental and family involvement, it primarily focuses on the *type* of involvement, or the activity, and does not put as much emphasis on the time of activity, the level of commitment, or the intensity of the activity; this limits its applicability in some circumstances, especially those in which the time and intensity may be what needs to be of primary consideration. The types of involvement are just the first step, and implementing an effective program requires much more than addressing the types of involvement, as the author acknowledges.

Each type of involvement includes many different practices of partnership. Each type has particular challenges that must be met in order to involve all families, and each type requires redefinitions of some basic principles of involvement.

Finally, each type leads to different results for students, families, and teachers.<sup>xvii</sup>

Many times parenting and learning at home are grouped as home-based involvement; communicating, volunteering, and decision making are grouped as school-based involvement. Collaborating with the community is neither completely home-based nor school-based, but focuses on the needs of the family, students, and schools and finding those resources in the community.

<b>Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Family Involvement</b>	
<b>TYPE 1--PARENTING:</b>	Assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.
<b>TYPE 2--COMMUNICATING:</b>	Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications
<b>TYPE 3--VOLUNTEERING:</b>	Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.
<b>TYPE 4—LEARNING AT HOME:</b>	Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions.
<b>TYPE 5—DECISION MAKING:</b>	Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations.
<b>TYPE 6--COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY:</b>	Coordinate resources and services <i>for</i> families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services <i>to</i> the community.

Table 1: Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Parental Involvement

While Epstein's framework is one of the most widespread definitions, and many studies draw from this framework to address parental involvement, there is a difference in

where the emphasis of involvement is placed, and how it is divided in other studies and investigations. Bakker's article focuses on how a family's socio-economic status may influence teacher perceptions of that family's parental involvement, listing many sources that use a similar definition. He used correlational analyses and paired-samples analyses to investigate how teacher perceptions of parent involvement and parents own reported involvement was related to parental education and student achievement levels. A questionnaire was given to 60 teachers and 218 parents in the Netherlands. The areas of parental involvement studied in Bakker's article are:

(a) participation in schools, which can vary from volunteering for school activities to participation in decision-making processes; (b) communication between parents and schools, which can vary from attendance of parent-teacher conferences to the reading of school newsletters; and (c) education activities in the home, which can vary from joint reading to the discussion of daily school activities.<sup>xviii</sup>

He utilizes many of the same areas as in Epstein's framework, but divides the activities of parental involvement differently. Communicating is not a school-based activity like in Epstein's framework, but rather a separate domain, and home-based activities are focused on interactions that seem directly related to the school domain. Epstein's domains of parenting and collaborating with the community are not really addressed in this definition of parental involvement. For the second and third group of activities, each is clearly linked to the school, whether it is activities from the day or communication that comes from the school. The school clearly has a place of prominence in this definition, with little focus on what the parents do outside of what is directly related to the school environment.

In comparison to Bakker's definition of parental involvement, another study comes from a point of view that is much more parent centered, although it does include many of the same elements; however it builds upon the familiar division of home and school-based involvement. Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey and her associates investigate why parents make the decision to become involved in the educational life of their child, and how this affects the achievement of the children. The definition has 3 domains that focus on behavioral, personal, and cognitive-intellectual areas.<sup>xix</sup> In Hoover-Dempsey's definition behavioral involvement refers to a parent participating in activities on the school campus and helping their children at home; cognitive-intellectual involvement refers to what extent and how a parent is engaged with the student in activities that stimulate intellectual development; personal involvement refers to following a child's progress and monitoring the progress in school.<sup>xx</sup>

These domains are investigated through the lens of parental self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura in Hoover-Dempsey's article. Self-efficacy is "the belief in one's abilities to act in ways that will produce desired outcomes."<sup>xxi</sup> The concept of self-efficacy is discussed in a later section. What is traditionally divided as two areas of parental involvement, home-based and school-based, are grouped together here as behaviors that the parents show in direct relation to school activity. All three areas in this definition cross the home-school divide, making it clear that parental involvement cannot be just school-based or home-based; they both work together in conjunction with each other. One cannot replace, or substitute the other. The other two domains actually look at areas that are not directly related to school activities, but that may be areas of parental action and attitude that greatly affect a student's academic achievement; those are the cognitive-intellectual and personal involvement domains of parental involvement.

Eva M. Pomerantz and her associates draw on different aspects and rearrange these elements, including parts from the definitions of Epstein, Hoover-Dempsey and other studies. Her overall definition comes from the work of Grolnick and Slowiackzek (1994), who define parental involvement as “parents’ commitment of resources to the academic arena of children’s lives”; she utilizes this as a basis for her discussion on the different forms of parental involvement and influence.<sup>xxii</sup> Later in the article, she does differentiate between home and school-based involvement, largely because it is a concrete definition that is user friendly to many different groups of people, from researchers and policy makers to schools and parents.<sup>xxiii</sup> In the article’s discussion, it gives different concrete examples that help to more clearly define what exactly parent involvement looks like, as detailed in the table below. School-based involvement represents activities and practices that necessitate parents actually making contact with schools. Home-based involvement is activities that are related to school, but occur outside the school domain. This does not mean they are always at home, just not in the school, and may or may not be directly related to school content and activities.<sup>xxiv</sup> All of these activities utilize her basic definition of a parent’s commitment of resources to the academic life of his or her child. Different activities require different commitments of time and effort. Pomerantz’s article focuses not just on what, but how involvement manifests within the lives of the students, which is evaluated in the section on what types of parental involvement are most effective. Pomerantz’s definition of parental involvement makes a clear case for not just the time allotted for activities, but the type of activity, or the how. This is a more in-depth understanding of what parents contribute when they are involved, but one factor that is not clear is how each activity is implemented; in other words, how intense is the participation, and are parents actually engaged? In the following chapters, Pomerantz’s definition of parental involvement will



be examined more closely, including 4 dichotomies of the qualities of parental involvement, or the manner in which these activities are implemented from the point of view of the parents.

Type of Involvement	Activities and Examples
School-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending general school meetings</li> <li>• Teacher-parent communication such as conferences and initiating contact with teachers</li> <li>• Specific school event attendance such as open houses and science fairs</li> <li>• Volunteering at the school</li> </ul>
Home-based	<p>Directly related to school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance with school-related tasks such as homework</li> <li>• Course selection</li> <li>• Responding and reacting to things such as school project choice or test grades</li> <li>• Talking with children about what happened in school and that doing well is important</li> </ul> <p>Not directly related to school but helping them develop intellectually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading books together</li> <li>• Taking them to places such as museums and plays</li> <li>• Going to the library</li> </ul>

Table 2: Activities and Examples of School and Home-based Involvement<sup>xxv</sup>

In the previous pages several different configurations of parental involvement have been detailed. All of the models have many aspects in common, including delineation between home and school-based involvement. While Epstein's framework of parental involvement clearly lists 6 different types of involvement, the other two focus more on not just the activities, but the reasons behind each type of involvement. In Epstein's explanation of home-based involvement, the link is directly to school curriculum, whereas the definitions Hoover-Dempsey and Pomerantz utilize also focus on activities at the cognitive-intellectual level that are not directly related to school curriculum. Within the recommendations at the end of this paper, the home and school division of involvement is utilized, while emphasizing other aspects that help determine the level of engagement of the parents, such as parental self-efficacy and other environmental factors. No one definition of parental involvement will fit for the individual circumstances of the school or parent, and as such, a unique definition utilizing resources like those analyzed above must be developed for each school as they determine upon which areas to focus.

### ***Student achievement***

The success of the student can be measured in many different ways, but the common underlying theme is that it is academically related. When choosing how to define student achievement several factors to take into consideration are: the age and grade of the students, the specific area being measured, the clarity of the measure, and applicability to general student success. In the paragraphs below, student achievement is defined in several different ways, considering the factors above.

There have been numerous studies of student achievement and the link of parental involvement in the achievement results. Some studies only define achievement in a general manner, never really giving details, while others are extremely specific in their

choice of achievement definition. An important distinction is if the measurement indicator is a broad-based achievement measure or a specific skill or subject measurement. A common measure of student academic success is literacy achievement because of its strong connection to all things academic and the need to be able to read written text in a society that gives great emphasis to obtaining information from written sources, including the internet. Although the internet includes many sources of information that are not based on words, many of the founts of knowledge still require literacy skills of not only reading the words, but having the ability to interpret, connect, and find further data. In addition, literacy is required to be able to navigate independently through all of the most basic written requirements of daily life, from reading a bus schedule to filling out job applications and getting telephone numbers.

In Southwest Educational Development Lab's 2002 synthesis "A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement," which provides an overview of family involvement and student achievement studies, different examples of academic measures were included. Unique academic result measures were used based on the age of the children or if a less quantitative result was desired. My study is primarily concerned with children from pre-kindergarten through elementary age. For young children teacher ratings on different aspects of development were used, including vocabulary, reading and other language skills, and social and motor skills.<sup>xxvi</sup> For children of school age report card grades, GPA, number of Advanced Placement classes, and standardized test scores (such as TAKS in Texas) have been used as measures of academic achievement. Additionally, measures that are less quantitative but related are students staying enrolled in school or promoted to the next grade, or indications such as behavior and appropriate development.<sup>xxvii</sup>

It is also instrumental to understand how particular studies define student achievement, particularly if it is not a general literacy level or standardized test score. In one study of parental involvement of elementary school age children, literacy performance was assessed using a Letter-Word identification scale, which required students to identify isolated letters and words and match picture representations with the objects.<sup>xxviii</sup> This measurement of student achievement was used in a longitudinal study for kindergarten, third, and fifth grade students. Sometimes student achievement is measured in a specific area that is not related to literacy, such as math achievement. Depending upon the type of study or desired outcome, the measure is broader, such as grades or overall test scores, or specialized to a specific literacy skill such as the example above, or in math. If the parental involvement intervention is focused on a particular goal, then the achievement measure should reflect this focus; if the study is of the overall level of student achievement, grades, test scores, or reading levels may be more appropriate. At the elementary level, student grades or reading levels seem to be the best measure of academic achievement.

### ***Definitions for master's report***

The previous sections discussed definitions used by different studies that will later be used for assessment of issues that affect parental involvement and student achievement. For purposes of this master's report, it is important to develop an understanding of both terms, drawing on resources above, but adding to those definitions. The analysis in this report is focused on the lens of elementary level students and parents, from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The definitions below will inform the recommendations made for increasing involvement at the elementary level.

Although the term used throughout this report is parental involvement, the definition I utilize includes elements of both involvement and engagement. The first step

in increasing involvement is to provoke engagement, or interest in the minds of parents to participate more actively. If engagement does not occur, then involvement will not follow. While Epstein and Bakker focus on types of activities, and Pomerantz includes not just the activity, but the manner of implementation, I suggest that a third dimension of the level or intensity of engagement and activity should be considered. This refers to not just the duration of the activity, but how actively parents are involved. To more clearly delineate the difference, consider the following scenarios. A parent may attend a back-to-school night for two hours, while another parent may actively assist their student with two hours of homework, a different parent volunteers in the classroom for two hours, and a fourth parent takes their child to the library and a museum for two hours. Each one lasts two hours and is recorded as involvement, but the commitment required and the impact on the child can be very different.

Parental engagement or involvement is not a finite activity; it is a web of the what, how, AND the how much, both in effort and time allotment. All three have to be in place and a determination made of which goes with which activity. The activities listed in Epstein's framework may be used. Time is very often most limited for parents, so the type of activity that requires less time but with more effort and the best method of implementation may be the best option for many parents. A continuum of how these different elements work together may serve as a better means of understanding parental involvement.

The lens for understanding student achievement is based on the focus of elementary grade levels. Student achievement is best measured through literacy, meaning the ability a student has to read. This may be decoding at the primary levels, and comprehension at the higher levels, but most elements of student achievement that I

have chosen as a focus are literacy based. The ability to read is one of the primary building blocks for future success in the higher levels of education and later in life<sup>xxix</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, 2002), <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf> (accessed July 2010), 13.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Ferguson, Chris, *The School-Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture, A Review of Current Literature*, Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections in Schools, 2008: pg. 8. <http://sedl.org> (accessed July 2010),.

<sup>v</sup> Henry Levin, Clive Belfield, Peter Meunig, and Cecilia Rouse. "The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children." 2007, pg. 2. Found at [http://www.cbcse.org/media/download\\_gallery/Leeds\\_Report\\_Final\\_Jan2007.pdf](http://www.cbcse.org/media/download_gallery/Leeds_Report_Final_Jan2007.pdf).

<sup>vi</sup> Dillon, Sam. "Study Finds High Rate of Imprisonment Among Dropouts." *New York Times*. October 8, 2009. Accessed on October 16, 2010.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html?\\_r=3](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html?_r=3).

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>x</sup> Andrew Sum et. al. "The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Joblessness and Jailing for High School Dropouts and the High Cost for Taxpayers." October 2009, pg. 15. Can be found at [http://www.clms.neu.edu/publication/documents/The\\_Consequences\\_of\\_Dropping\\_Out\\_of\\_High\\_School.pdf](http://www.clms.neu.edu/publication/documents/The_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School.pdf). Accessed October 17, 2010.

<sup>xi</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education, "Adolescent Literacy: Opening the Doors for Success", Issue Brief for the, Updated January 2005, <http://www.all4ed.org> (accessed October 16, 2010).

<sup>xii</sup> National 4-H Council and the University of Arizona, "Academic Success," Building Partnerships for Youth: National 4-H Council and the University of Arizona, [http://cals-cf.calsnet.arizona.edu/fcs/bpy/content.cfm?content=academic\\_success](http://cals-cf.calsnet.arizona.edu/fcs/bpy/content.cfm?content=academic_success) (accessed October 16, 2010).

<sup>xiii</sup> Arne Duncan speech given on May 3, 2010.

<sup>xiv</sup> Shakti Belway, Mishaela Durán, and Lela Spielberg, *State Laws of Family Engagement in Education: National PTA Reference Guide*, National PTA Association, <http://pta.org> (accessed October 13, 2010).

<sup>xv</sup> Arne Duncan speech given on May 3, 2010.

<sup>xvi</sup> "Epstein's Six Types of Involvement," National Network of Partnership Schools, <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/sixtypes.htm> (accessed October 19, 2010). Taken from Epstein, J.L., Coates, L., Salinas, K.C., Sanders, M.G., & Simon, B.S. (1997). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

<sup>xvii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xviii</sup> Joep Bakker, Eddie Denessen, and Mariel Brus-Laeven, "Socio-economic background, parental involvement and teacher perceptions of these in relation to pupil achievement", *Educational Studies* 33, no. 2 (June 2007): 178-179, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03055690601068345> (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>xix</sup> Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey et al., "Why Do Parents Become Involved? Research Findings and Implications," *The Elementary School Journal* 106, no. 2 (2005): 109, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/family-school/papers/Hoover-Dempsey2005.pdf> (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>xx</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxi</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>xxii</sup> Eva M. Pomerantz, Elizabeth A. Moorman, and Scoot D. Litwack, "The How, Whom, and Why of Parents' Involvement in Children's Academic Lives: More is Not Always Better," *Review of Educational Research* 77, no. 3 (2007): 374, <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/77/3/373> (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>xxiv</sup> Ibid, 375.

<sup>xxv</sup> Ibid, 375.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Eric Dearing et al., "Family Involvement in School and Low-Income Children's Literacy: Longitudinal Associations Between and Within Families", *Journal of Educational Psychology* 98, no. 4 (2006): 656, PSYarticles, EBSCO Host (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>xxix</sup> I am a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher and as such, have seen that this is the grade in which the ability to read, from decoding to comprehension, really begins to make a difference in all other subjects. If someone cannot read, their access to information of any kind is limited to the oral and pictorial, which severely limits academic achievement, even if the information would be understood otherwise. Most tests are word based and success is determined on ability to understand what is written.

## **Chapter 2: Does Parental Involvement Make a Difference?**

In order for policy to be implemented to increase and encourage parental involvement for the purpose of increasing student achievement, it is first essential that the link between parental involvement and academic achievement be established. If parents' involvement in their children's education does not have an effect, then it would not be a useful policy option or emphasis as a means for increasing student achievement. The following sections delve more deeply into studies of parental involvement and student achievement to develop the link between the two. The first part establishes the importance of parental involvement. The second part discusses how much of a difference it makes and the third for which groups of students the impact may be greatest. The final section investigates the connection between quality and quantity of parental involvement for student achievement.

### **INDICATIONS OF IMPORTANCE**

The presence of parental involvement has been a key policy issue for over the last half century, as evidenced in policy documents and federal laws such as No Child Left Behind. Much emphasis has been placed on this particular option as a method for increasing student achievement. Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have some sort of parental involvement laws in place that require districts and school to develop involvement and engagement policies.<sup>i</sup> Even without quantitative evidence to indicate influence of parental involvement on achievement, the sheer scope of emphasis in federal and state law is enough to make it a policy option worthy of discussion.

An increasing body of research provides support to the statements made by many organizations and individuals, including the current U.S. Secretary of Education. In a



2002 publication by the Southwest Educational Development Lab that provided an evaluative overview of 51 studies about the link between family, community, and the school with student achievement, the authors found that “taken as a whole, these studies found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students at all ages.”<sup>ii</sup> Every study may not have used the exact same definition of parental involvement or student achievement, but a positive relationship across more than 50 quality studies provides a convincing argument for the importance of parental and family involvement in the lives of our students, especially since the studies selected for the evaluative synthesis publication were subjected to stringent quality standards and picked from a much larger group of studies on the subject. The authors searched for studies that not only were of sound methodology and had conclusions consistent with their findings, but also included studies from differing levels of school. The studies ranged from early childhood to high school, with a mix of quantitative and qualitative research, as was available from the period 1993-2002.<sup>iii</sup>

As a general trend, most documents have found a positive correlation between family/parental involvement and student academic achievement. Of the few findings that have not followed this rule, many of them were in the area of home parental involvement, particularly on help with homework. In Pomerantz’s review of literature in her article on how parents are involved with their children, she cites several studies from the late 1990s and early 2000s, stating that “several concurrent investigations of families from diverse backgrounds have revealed that parents’ assistance with homework is associated with poor performance in school among children.”<sup>iv</sup> However, she goes on to draw from her own research that refutes that these studies actually showed that parents helping with

their children's homework is really correlated to the students performing poorly in school. What her own study showed is that a child's poor performance in school would predict that parents would then begin to help more with homework in the next several months. Once adjusted for initial starting point of achievement, the mother's additional assistance with homework then actually predicted better achievement over time.<sup>v</sup>

Another instance of research correlating parent involvement to the possibility of negative achievement discusses what I would call "helicopter parents." Some parents are more involved than others without encouragement from a parental engagement program, sometimes to the point that it can create negative consequences for the school personnel and students as a whole, because these parents believe that the needs of their child are the most important, to the exclusion of all else. In fact, this type of pressure and involvement may "create debilitating pressures on schools' abilities to meet the educational needs of all students" and lead to a decrease in a child's opportunity to learn responsibility for himself.<sup>vi</sup> This type of involvement is so pressure filled, that the importance of *how* parents are involved becomes especially important.

The two examples above are the exceptions to the majority of findings that list an overall benefit to the overall presence or increase of parental involvement, as correlated with a student academic achievement measure. The actual extent of the benefit can vary greatly across studies, depending upon who is studied, for how long, and the measure utilized. The positive effect can range from a greatly documented improvement of student outcome to no change at all. The magnitude of the positive correlation, and for whom, is discussed in the following sections.

### **HOW MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE DOES PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT MAKE?**

Many studies show a statistically significant positive correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement, but in most cases the magnitude of the benefit is

small to moderate. Most authors postulate that this is probably due to so many factors being involved in whether or not a student is academically successful.<sup>vii</sup> Some of the most important factors, discussed briefly in the introduction, include the quality and experience of the teacher, the curriculum, and the funds and materials available for each student. Even when the results show a small correlation between parental involvement and student achievement, it can still be an important finding. In a longitudinal study involving elementary school students, the academic achievement measure was literacy performance, and the majority of the students were low-income and English Language Learners. In this study by Dearing, increasing involvement over the years was second in affect size only to what literacy level the child was at when the child entered kindergarten.<sup>viii</sup> The emphasis for this particular study was not just on parental involvement but *increasing* involvement. So as the parent was more involved over time, the child's literacy level tended to increase. This provides a strong impetus for parent involvement and engagement programs that would target not only involvement overall, but even increasing the involvement of those parents already actively participating in the academic environment with their students.

Parental involvement of different types in some studies has more than a small to moderate effect. In a November 2002 study by Reginald Clark for the North Central Educational Research Laboratory, "In School and Out-Of-School Factors that Build Student Achievement: Research Based Implications for School Instructional Policy," positive correlations ranging from 7 to 18 percent for certain types of parental involvement was found. This study evaluated data from the 1990s at schools in different states, and one portion of the research accounted 18 percent of the difference in standardized test scores for elementary age students to high parental expectations for students and good support relationships with the teacher.<sup>ix</sup> When teachers reported more

communication with parents and when the parents felt that they had a good relationship with the teacher, together these results accounted for 7 percent of the students' difference in scores on standardized reading tests. The same report found that 51 percent of the variance in student test scores was accounted for in differences with school and family process factors, such as expectations, support, and communication.<sup>x</sup> These are not small differences in effect. Even though this study was not using current data, the information still provides convincing evidence that parent involvement is an important contributing factor to student achievement.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND DIFFERENT GROUPS OF STUDENTS**

The factors that work together to form the environment within which a student learns are varied, and the relationships complicated. Parental involvement is one of those factors that have been shown to have an overall positive impact on the achievement levels of students when isolated for study and in conjunction with other factors. The previous section described the overall magnitude of parental involvement, which although not always the largest factor, definitely has a significant effect in qualitative studies, and has been shown to be statistically significant in several correlational studies of different data sets, including at least one longitudinal study. One of the most important questions for school personnel and teachers, then, becomes figuring out which groups of students would potentially benefit the most from parental involvement programs and interventions. The discussion below examines evidence from different studies about which groups receive the most benefit from parental involvement programs and increasing parental involvement.

In general parental involvement seems to make the most impact for investment with students that are outside the mainstream middle class student of European descent. This is not to say that parental involvement for these students does not have a positive

impact; to the contrary, most of these students tend to have higher average levels of involvement than other groups. Therefore, increasing levels of parental involvement for groups of students who begin with less parental involvement show a larger return when involvement has been measured in studies. These students tend to be from minority families with lower educational attainment; many begin the schooling process already behind academically, and may have had early negative experiences with schooling. Several studies “found that the academic achievement of low-income students in particular seems to vary directly with the degree of parental involvement.”<sup>xi</sup>

One important factor for parental involvement is not just what the results are of involvement by families, but what changes in parental involvement. If the goal is to increase student achievement, the magnitude of the change is important. In Dearing’s longitudinal study of low-income elementary students, he investigated how family involvement affected literacy levels of the students, measuring the same students in kindergarten, third grade, and fifth grade. One of the most illuminating results was that an association was found between high family involvement and literacy level achievements for students who had mothers with below-average education levels. There was no association for children with mother’s who had above-average education levels.

For children whose mothers had above-average levels of education, there was no association between average level of family involvement in school and average literacy performance. On the other hand, for children whose mothers had below-average levels of education, higher levels of family involvement were associated with better literacy performance. In fact, although children with less educated mother had, on average, approximately 10% fewer items correct on the literacy scales than children with more educated mothers if family involvement in school

was low, this achievement gap was nonexistent if family involvement in school was high.<sup>xii</sup>

This quote not only shows that family involvement is associated with student literacy levels, but indicates that family involvement actually closes the gap that many low-income students have in comparison to others. With high parental involvement, the students that tend to start out behind the average student in literacy achievement actually make larger gains, enough to negate the gap that the students began with at the beginning of their studies. In addition to the finding above, Dearing's article shows a clear association not just for parental involvement overall in relation to student literacy levels, but rather a positive link with involvement that *increases over time*. So just because parents start out with high levels is not enough; that level must be maintained or increased. For parents that do not start out being very involved, gains can be made if those levels increase over time, showing a long-term effect.<sup>xiii</sup> This is especially salient considering that involvement generally tends to decrease over time from elementary to middle and high school levels, but the rate of decrease tends to begin at earlier levels for low-income families.<sup>xiv</sup>

The majority of studies that investigate different groups of students focus on factors such as income, ethnicity, or education level of the family. Within a study about the how of parental involvement as opposed to the how much, Pomerantz discusses that boys may receive a greater benefit than girls from involvement. The study suggests that girls tend to have more experience in developing competence because girls tend to get better grades, due in part to being more self-disciplined and "mastery-oriented." Boys therefore, would receive more benefit than girls from parental involvement focused on skills and motivation to learn. Both genders would likely receive equal benefit from

parental involvement in the form of parents showing interest in their lives.<sup>xv</sup> The key component here is that the study is not making a blanket statement that boys receive more benefit than girls from parental involvement, but rather that boys and girls may need different types of involvement based on general characteristics of each sex. While overall generalizations can never be made for all students, it is helpful to see that the needs of boys and girls may be different, even across all other income, family, and ethnic lines. The emphasis on the type of involvement versus the time allocation of involvement is discussed in the upcoming section.

### **QUANTITY VERSUS QUALITY AND TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Much of the discussion thus far has focused on the quantity of parental involvement, whether as an overall involvement level or on increasing the quantity of time and activities in which parents participate with their children. The most common division on types of involvement is where the activities occur, home-based or school-based. While studies that correlate overall involvement levels with positive gains in student achievement are crucial to solidify the argument that parental involvement is an essential piece to the achievement puzzle, it does not really give information that can be utilized by districts, schools, and teachers to target specific groups of students. So is home-based or school-based involvement more effective? Do home-based activities complement school-based involvement, or are they sometimes contradictory? Is it just the time invested in these activities, or is there a large effect based on *how* they are implemented? These questions will be examined in the following sections in an attempt to give more specific information that can be utilized by schools, teachers, and even parents.

Several different variables work to determine how effective parental involvement is as a means for increasing academic achievement. While most investigate the type of

activities and how much time parents spend in their involvement, one particular study evaluates how parents are involved. In “The How, Whom, and Why of Parents’ Involvement in Children’s Academic Lives: More is Not Always Better,” Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack discuss how parents become involved in their children’s life and the effect on their academic achievement. While the study delineates involvement as home and school based, largely as a useful distinction for different stakeholders, most of the emphasis seems to be related more to home-involvement. The study focuses on four dichotomous pairs that focus on the style of parent involvement. These four areas of examination are: 1) autonomy support vs. control; 2) process vs. person focus; 3) positive vs. negative affect; and 4) positive vs. negative beliefs about children’s potential.<sup>xvi</sup> In the table below, each quality of involvement is listed along with examples of involvement based at school and based at home. The autonomy support versus control dimension refers to if the parent tends to be more controlling or allows for the child to be more autonomous and in control of his or her own learning experience. Process versus person is referring to whether or not a parent focuses on the effort their child puts forth in educational endeavors or focuses on the person, or what is considered innate ability, or rather the potential for achievement the student can possibly reach. Positive versus negative affect refers to the affect that the parent’s involvement has on the child, on the general attitude of the parent when interacting with children. Positive versus negative beliefs about children’s potential is fairly self-explanatory; whether or not a parent believes that his or her child has the potential to be successful and the extent can serve as a determinant in involvement and color interactions and outcomes.

The conclusion reached is that autonomy support, process focus, positive affect, and positive beliefs about a child’s potential have the most benefit for the academic achievement levels of children. The way that parents interact with their children or



implement activities is as important, if not more important than the type or amount of involvement activities in the home or school based spheres. While the positive affect and positive belief in student's potential are fairly self-explanatory, autonomy support versus control and process versus person deserve a bit more examination.

Autonomy support means that parents give students more independence and control over their own learning situations, as opposed to controlling most of the facets of this experience for the child. This type of support falls within the realm of skill development by allowing children the opportunity to solve problems on their own instead of always having them solved for them. It also helps with motivational development by giving children the choice to take the initiative, allowing for a learned sense of control over their own learning, as being capable of performing activities on their own to determine their own success.<sup>xvii</sup> In the home-based realm, parents who show autonomy support may wait to be asked for assistance on homework instead of automatically offering assistance. On the school-based realm, parents would allow the student to show them around on back-to-school night instead of automatically taking control. These types of activities give students the chance to have success and regulate their own learning, which often leads to higher academic achievement.<sup>xviii</sup> Earlier in this report it was discussed that parental involvement with homework has been linked to poor academic achievement. Perhaps that is because parents that do not allow children to do their own homework do not give their children a chance to develop autonomous skills they can apply in other situations.

Process versus person focus refers to whether or not a parent focuses on the effort of a student (process) or the innate ability (person) in regards to how well a child performs academically. Specifically, it is linked to how motivated a child may be to put forth effort in order to attain higher levels of achievement. If a child believes that their

success is based on academic abilities that are predetermined, said child does not have a reason to put forth more effort if not performing well academically. The potential level of achievement is already set, and if parents believe that a child is not capable of higher achievement, then effort will not make a difference. However, if a parent focuses less on the outcome, and more on the effort, then the reason for subpar academic achievement could very well be the amount of time and effort put forth, and the student can change this by alternative action and more effort. Most of the research is not directly related to parental involvement, but “although no research to date has examined the effects of parents’ process versus person focus on children’s performance in school, there is a growing body of research suggesting that parents’ process-focused involvement enhances children’s school performance.”<sup>xix</sup>

Quality of involvement	Type of involvement	
	School based	Home based
Autonomy support	Parents encourage children to show them around during open houses in children's classrooms.	Parents support children in developing their own schedules for doing their homework.
Control	When volunteering in children's classrooms, parents monitor children's work habits.	Parents make decisions without children's input about the topic of their school research projects.
Process focus	When attending open houses and seeing children's work, parents focus on what fun children might have had in doing the work.	While helping children with homework, parents focus on the process of mastering the work.
Person focus	After attending parent-teacher conferences, parents emphasize to children issues regarding children's innate ability.	In praising children's success at homework problems, parents emphasize the role of children's innate ability in solving them.
Positive affect	Parents express enjoyment and love toward their children when taking part in school field trips.	Parents' conversations with children about their day at school are characterized by support and caring on parents' part.
Negative affect	Parents become irritated and annoyed with children about having to talk to children's teachers.	Parents are hostile and critical while checking over children's homework.
Positive beliefs about children's potential	At a parent-teacher conference, parents are sure to attend to children's strengths.	While assisting with homework, parents convey to children that they have the potential to do well.
Negative beliefs about children's potential	In attending open houses, parents ignore the difficult tasks because they believe children have little potential for such tasks.	Parents focus their conversations with children on avoiding complete failure in school rather than on how children might achieve success.

Table 3: School-based and home-based examples of different involvement qualities<sup>xx</sup>

Pomerantz also delves into two different ways that parental involvement makes an impact on student achievement, through skill development and motivational development. In skill development frameworks, involvement improves achievement through development of cognitive skills such as receptive language capability,

phonological awareness, and high-order skills related to the learning process. These include planning, monitoring, and regulating learning. Motivational development refers to the motivators that children can develop from their parents' involvement that serve to make them want to do well in school. These are resources that they can draw upon as a means of pursuing high academic achievement. Examples are intrinsic motivation for education, belief in their control over their own academic performance, and a sense of academic competence. These often lead to more engagement in school. Both of these models of skill development and motivational resources are important for academic achievement, especially when facilitated by parental and family involvement.<sup>xxi</sup>

Parental involvement, both the quantity and the quality of activities are important for student academic achievement. Much of the research documents this statement and shows that parents that are involved make a difference in the lives of their students in many different ways that relate to how successful they are in school. For school personnel and other policy and program designers, the question then becomes how to utilize this information for the results that have been shown. For students whose parents do not show high levels of involvement, will increasing this involvement, or changing the way they are involved, make an impact on achievement? Many of the students who start school behind academically and tend to remain behind are those from lower socioeconomic status households. In Dearing's longitudinal study low-income families at the elementary level, one of the most important findings is that *increasing* parental involvement over the course of time shows gains in literacy performance, more so than students with parents who had stable or decreasing involvement.<sup>xxii</sup> This finding provides a strong push for school personnel and others, since increasing the involvement of parents can help to close the gap of students that are already behind academically, to develop a program to do just that.

If parental involvement increasing over time leads to larger gains in academic and literacy achievement, it follows that governments, districts, schools and even individual teachers should strive to accomplish that goal for the needs of the students. Ideally, the goal would be for parents to increase their involvement without incentive or programs, or have strong involvement levels to begin with. If parent involvement programs are to be successful, it is necessary to tailor programs to specific groups and have specific targets of involvement. Programs “can target and create involvement opportunities that are responsive to differences in parental knowledge, skills, time, and energy” in order to address specific needs of each group at each school.<sup>xxiii</sup> This is even true for teachers who choose to work on their class’s own parental involvement.

One other particularly important facet of the quality and quantity of parental involvement in general, and programs in particular, is the impact of who solicits the involvement from the parents. While parents may be told that they need to participate by the government, by the district, and even by the school, an invitation by the child’s teacher or the child himself may be one of the single most influential actions that cause a parent to become involved. From teachers, when “specific, targeted, and within the range of activities that parents can reasonably manage,” invitations prove effective for promoting parental involvement. Children’s invitations can be implicit or explicit, coming from the parent realizing there is a need for interaction, or from a specific invitation from the child, elicited on his or her own, or through the influence of the classroom teacher.<sup>xxiv</sup> These invitations and the manner in which they are crafted can be an influencing factor on both the time parents spend involved and how they become involved. As emphasized more than once, these invitations and programs for parental involvement should always occur within the context of considering what parents can do and are willing to do, within the constraints of every day life. Understanding what type

of parental involvement is key, as well as understanding factors that influence parents' actions and motivations. These are discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>i</sup> Shakti Belway, Mishaela Durán, and Lela Spielberg, *State Laws of Family Engagement in Education: National PTA Reference Guide*, National PTA Association, <http://pta.org> (accessed October 13, 2010).

<sup>ii</sup> Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, 2002), 24, <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf> (accessed July 2010).

<sup>iii</sup> For more information on study selection criteria and variety of studies see Henderson and Mapp in the reference above, page 13. "In School and Out-Of-School Factors that Build Student Achievement: Research Based Implications for School Instructional Policy,"

<sup>iv</sup> Eva M. Pomerantz, Elizabeth A. Moorman, and Scoot D. Litwack, "The How, Whom, and Why of Parents' Involvement in Children's Academic Lives: More is Not Always Better," *Review of Educational Research* 77, no. 3 (2007): 378, <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/77/3/373> (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>v</sup> Ibid, page 379.

<sup>vi</sup> Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey et al., "Why Do Parents Become Involved? Research Findings and Implications," *The Elementary School Journal* 106, no. 2 (2005): 107, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/family-school/papers/Hoover-Dempsey2005.pdf> (accessed September 27, 2010),

<sup>vii</sup> See Henderson and Mapp (2002) for more information.

<sup>viii</sup> Eric Dearing et al., "Family Involvement in School and Low-Income Children's Literacy: Longitudinal Associations Between and Within Families", *Journal of Educational Psychology* 98, no. 4 (2006): 660, PsychARTICLES WEBSOhost (accessed November 20, 2010).

<sup>ix</sup> Reginald Clark, "In School and Out-Of-School Factors that Build Student Achievement: Research Based Implications for School Instructional Policy," North Central Regional Education Laboratory, <http://www.ncrel.org/gap/clark/index.html> (accessed October 18, 2010).

<sup>x</sup> Ibid. See "In School and Out of School Factors that Build Student Achievement: Factors that Contribute to Achievement" section of previous citation.

<sup>xi</sup> Dolores C. Peña, "Parent Involvement: Influencing Factors and Implications", *The Journal of Educational Research*, 94 no. 1 (2000): 42, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220670009598741> (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>xii</sup> Eric Dearing et al., 659.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid., 660.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid, 661.

<sup>xv</sup> Eva M. Pomerantz, et al., 393.

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid, 381.

<sup>xvii</sup> Ibid, 383.

<sup>xviii</sup> Ibid, 383.

<sup>xix</sup> Ibid. 385. For more information please see studies listed on this page, including Mueller and Dweck (1998) and Kamins & Dweck (1999).

<sup>xx</sup> Table taken from Pomerantz et al., 382.

<sup>xxi</sup> Ibid, 376.

<sup>xxii</sup> Eric Dearing et al., 660.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey et al., 114.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Ibid, 112.

### **Chapter 3: Factors Affecting Parental Involvement**

The recipe for achieving high student academic achievement is a complex one, and the secret ingredient is not always known. What works for one group of students or one individual student does not necessarily mean that particular recipe will work for the next group of students. In general the factors that make up the “recipe” together to determine student achievement are the teacher, the school, the student, and the family. These different entities may work together, but can also work against each other, particularly if different groups have different goals, values, or understanding of what constitutes parental involvement. Although parental involvement was defined in a previous chapter, those are definitions by researchers and for purposes of this report. One of the most crucial first steps to increasing parental involvement is to develop a dialog ensuring that each stakeholder has a shared definition of what constitutes involvement and what is most valued by all parties.

Each of these has many different variable qualities that also help to determine student success. This report focuses on the ingredient of parental achievement as a means for increasing student academic achievement. In the previous chapters, the importance of parental involvement and the quality and quantity of parental involvement have been examined. In this chapter the reasons for parents being involved or not involved are discussed, the *why* of different parents for choosing to participate or not participate in certain ways in the academic lives of their children. The reasons are multitude and varied within and between student groups; the reasons come from data drawn from studies, statistics, and the reasons given by parents themselves. The answers provide insight into the complex motivators and busy lives of parents, as well as ways in which other stakeholders promote and prevent parent involvement, offering ideas for

recommendations of change in order to increase student achievement and involvement. For parental involvement to be most effective, it requires a common understanding, strong relationships between school and parents, and activities that are manageable for both parents and school staff that target individual goals of student achievement, such as reading levels or TAKS scores.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BY THE NUMBERS**

Different groups of parents have varied levels of involvement in their students' academic lives, and participate at different levels in specific types of involvement in the school and home spheres. The data below serve as a starting point for discussing factors of involvement, based on which groups participate, and how. The data for this section is taken from surveys administered by the U.S. Department of Education and reported through the National Center for Education Statistics. School-based involvement has been studied more broadly as a method of parental involvement, as opposed to home-based involvement. Therefore, most of the figures will relate to parent's involvement in school activities, particularly back-to-school nights, regularly scheduled conferences with teachers, and volunteering. What these figures do not reveal is the quality or time investment of the parents involved in the activities, which may be more crucial than the actual type of activity. The primary focus will be on families in the public school system.

Parent attendance levels at back-to-school or open house nights and conferences are relatively high overall; in fact participation levels have increased over time. In 2007, 87 percent of public school parents attended a general meeting, as opposed to 74 percent in 1993 and 75 percent in 1999. Ninety-seven percent of private school parents attended a general meeting in 2007. Almost three-quarters of public school parents attended parent-teacher conferences in 2007, an increase of 9 percentage points from 1996. Eighty-six percent of private school parents attended conferences in 2007. Higher



involvement levels were reported for private-school parents in school event attendance and volunteering. Seventy-two percent of public school parents attended a school event while 86 percent of parents from private schools attended events in 2007. The most striking difference is in levels of volunteering and committee participation; 65 percent of parents from private schools reported participating in these activities while only 40 percent of public-school parents volunteered or served on a committee in the same year.<sup>i</sup> The most likely explanation is that volunteering and committee participation require a much more *intense* engagement with students and school personnel, whereas the back-to-school night and conference attendance are more passive forms of involvement.

***Involvement based on ethnicity, income, and education level***

Overall participation rates are given above, but it is equally important to understand how participation levels differ across racial and ethnic lines and income variations. Table 4 contains the data discussed in this section. The statistics given below are based on reported information from public and private school parents, with the respondent being the parent most knowledgeable about the child's education and family household activities. Overall, white parents reported higher participation across all categories than parents of black or Hispanic background. Similar to previous information, the greatest difference was in class event attendance and school volunteer rates. In regard to income levels, for each five thousand dollar positive change in family income, involvement rates went up accordingly. Attendance of a general school meeting varied from 76 percent for parents making less than 5 thousand dollars to 95 percent for parents earning over 75 thousand dollars. An increase of over 40 percentage points occurred when divided by income level based on attendance of a class event. Of those parents earning fewer than 5 thousand dollars annually only 44.7 percent attended a class event; of those earning over 75 thousand dollars annually 85.4 percent attended a class

event. The most difference between groups of parents in percentage points participation is primarily on the lowest end and at the highest end of the income scale. The same trend appears in the percentages for school volunteering, with percentages reported of 27.8 percent for household income fewer than 5 thousand and 62 percent for households earning over 75 thousand. These two activities require more time commitment, and many factors other than income could account for the differences reported by income.

When responding based on the highest education level of the parents, the same pattern emerged. The single biggest jump in participation levels occurred between parents with that did not graduate high school and those with the highest level attained a high school diploma or GED. The jump between these two categories was between 10 and 20 percentage points in each category, while each additional increase in education level was considerably less. The difference was less in general meeting and parent-teacher conference attendance, but greater in class event attendance and volunteer rate.<sup>ii</sup> One of the most striking differences is between the percentage of parents that volunteered at their children's school in relation to family income and education level. For education the figures ranged from 19.5 percent for parents with less than a high school diploma to 64 percent of parents with a graduate degree. Almost 28 percent of parents with income of less than 5000 dollars volunteered while 62 percent of parents with household income over 75,000 dollars volunteered.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>General school meeting</b>	<b>Parent- teacher conference</b>	<b>Class event</b>	<b>Volunteered at school</b>
<b>Race or Ethnicity</b>				
White	90.9	77.8	80.1	54.2
Black	86.7	77.3	64.7	35
Hispanic	86.7	80.2	65	31.8
Asian	91	79.9	71.4	45.8
American Indian/Alaska Native	94.2	79.7	80.8	58.4
<b>Education</b>				
Less than H.S.	75.2	69.7	48.1	19.5
H.S. or GED	84.5	74.3	65.1	33
Some college	87.5	75.7	69.3	40.2
Associate Degree	91.9	80.2	76.9	45.3
Bachelor's Degree	93.6	81.4	83.2	57.1
Graduate Degree	95.6	82.3	87.3	64.1
<b>Family Income in Thousands of Dollars</b>				
Less than 5	76.3	66.1	44.7	27.8
5 to 10	80	76	56.2	26.3
10 to 15	76.7	73	56.8	28.8
15 to 20	81.9	83	58.9	17.4
20 to 25	84.8	78.9	64.7	29.9
25 to 30	85.5	76.6	63.4	35.9
30 to 35	85.6	72.4	67.6	31.5
35 to 40	88	74.9	69.9	32.8
40 to 50	88.8	79.4	74.3	40.8
50 to 75	92	78.6	79	51.7
Over 75	95	79.9	85.4	62

Table 4: 2007 Percentages of family involvement based on selected characteristics<sup>iii</sup>

### *Involvement figures for public schools*

Individual demographics are not the only ones to consider when evaluating parental involvement figures. On the contrary, most programs whose goal is to increase parental involvement are not targeted to one person, but rather a school or district. Therefore, it is imperative that these figures also be studied. Two of the most common school-based parental involvement activities are conference and back-to-school night attendance. For all public schools reporting for the 2003-2004 school year, 44 percent reported that 75 to 100 percent of parents attended back to school night and 31 percent reported between 50 to 75 percent attendance. Fifty percent of schools reported between 75 to 100 percent attendance and 23 percent reported between 50 and 75 percent attendance. Taken as a whole, roughly 75 percent of public schools had parental involvement levels of over fifty percent for these two activities. When observing participation rates differentiated by schooling level, primary schools had much higher attendance levels than middle schools, and high schools had the least. The drop between primary and middles schools for 75 to 100 percent attendance dropped by 50 percent for conferences and by one-third for back-to-school night.<sup>iv</sup> The percentage of schools reporting over fifty percent participation in these activities generally drops considerably when minority enrollment and the number of students eligible for the federal free lunch program increases. The same trend is seen with an increase in the percentage of students who consider academic achievement important. This provides a link between parental expectations and involvement.<sup>v</sup> This is not to say that minority children from lower socio-economic households automatically have parents that are less involved. The involvement may either be home-based due to constraints in work schedule and other every day factors, or the type of involvement may not be of a form generally acknowledged by the school or researchers. Parents may also not be literate themselves

or feel they are able to help, or rather, have the capacity to be of assistance to their children. These issues relate to later sections examining every day life factors and cultural, linguistic, and educational factors.

The figures show general nationwide trends for parental involvement based on different group characteristics at the national level. While these patterns are important to take into account, it is equally important to examine local trends and group characteristics and consider other factors behind the figures in order to better understand the complicated landscape of parental involvement and have more information with which to formulate effective policy. Many different factors can be positive or negative influences on parental involvement, depending upon the point of view of the involved parties, communication, and implementation. Clearly parental involvement “is a multidimensional construct ... [that] encompasses a variety of roles and responsibilities” within which parents and schools must navigate. There are many factors that come together to determine to what extent and in what kind of involvement parents choose to and feel the ability to participate. Factors that influence parental involvement are divided below and discussed as both potential barriers and opportunities for increasing involvement.

## **INVOLVEMENT FACTORS THAT CAN BE NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE**

### ***Every day family demands***

The role of parent is only one of the many positions that adults have within the every day activities of life. Each parent is often the parent to more than one child, spouse, provider, disciplinarian, and caretaker of self. Each parent must first meet the basic needs of the family before beginning to think about the other activities that schools ask of them, from helping with homework to becoming involved in the decision-making processes of the school. Clearly this is one of the barriers to greater time investment of

parental involvement. This is particularly true for parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds that may work more than one job with rotating hours, or shifts that do not correlate well to the activity hours the school keeps. Parents must balance all of the demands of daily requirements and still find time to be as involved as possible to increase their children's academic achievement. While these demands are understood fairly well, they are still crucial considerations when developing policy and programs to increase parent involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and others found that "parents often seek opportunities for involvement that fit within the demands they routinely experience ... and are consistent with their beliefs about the importance of involvement in their children's education."<sup>vi</sup> Finding time and having choices for involvement that are able to work within the regular demands of the parent is key, as well as the parent understanding and believing in the importance of chosen involvement activities. In the following paragraphs, other factors are examined that should be part of the equation of parental involvement and academic achievement.

### ***Education level***

The education level of the parents is an important factor in the academic success of children, not only because children of less educated parents tend to come to school not having as many academic experiences in comparison to children from families with higher education levels, but in how it affects the way parents are involved with their children's education. As referenced in a study by Dolores Peña, Carrasquillo and London said that "parents are not prepared to help with homework because of their own limited education."<sup>vii</sup> When parents feel this way, they are much less likely to even make the attempt to assist, which leads to less time spent in activities related to their child's education and less effort as well. This idea is reinforced by statistics from the U.S. Department of Education, as discussed in the previous data section; parents with less than

a high school education not only are less likely to assist with home-based activities, but participate in school-based activities at significantly lower rates, depending on the type of activity.<sup>viii</sup>

On the other hand, parents that have higher education levels tend to participate at higher levels and feel more competent in assisting their children with academic content and activities at home, thus leading to higher levels of home and school involvement. Parents with higher levels of educational attainment and higher levels of involvement also tend to be of European American (white) descent or Asian, are more comfortable navigating the education system, and have a generally more thorough understanding of the education system. In the table in the previous section, White and Asian groups generally had the highest levels of parental involvement in all areas.

### ***Language and culture***

The number of children in the U.S. education system who come from families where the language spoken at home is not English is increasing, especially in certain geographical areas. These children are usually immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants, whose parents grew up in a different culture or with a different majority language. Language and cultural differences can be a factor that determines whether or not parents become involved in the academic lives of their children.

For students whose home language is not English, many have parents who also do not speak English or are not comfortable communicating in English with teachers and other school staff. The basic ability to communicate can greatly inhibit the participation of parents that want to be involved but do not feel capable. For those parents that do attend but then find that they cannot understand, it can serve as a deterrent for future involvement. In the words of one parent who attended a PTA meeting at her child's school, translated from Spanish, "Well, I do not understand anything, so what does it

serve for people to come?’’<sup>ix</sup> She had attended, but the principal spoke entirely in English, so she came, but left, because she did not understand anything, and did not try to be involved in these types of meetings in the future. This sentiment is repeated in another study of Latino parents in Prince George’s county, Maryland. The term used in that study was “language barrier,” referring to parent’s lack of English skills and the school not having many (if any) bilingual personnel who could communicate with the parents.<sup>x</sup> Parents often choose not to be involved in school-based activities due to language challenges, but even in schools that do have bilingual personnel who can speak the home language of the parents, cultural differences can often serve as a barrier.

In one study of factors that affect Mexican-American parents, both limited knowledge of English and cultural differences were found to be deterrents to involvement both at school and at home. Even when parents do speak English different cultural understandings can still be a barrier. In Dolores Peña’s investigation of parental involvement of Mexican-American parents, most of the school staff was bilingual, but different cultural understandings and perceptions limited involvement. One of the teachers said that “‘I guess they don’t want to get involved or they’re, I don’t know, shy or they don’t know the system.’”<sup>xi</sup> This quote shows that the teacher believes the parents don’t want to get involved, or they may not know the school system due to not going to school in this country. Peña states that “‘Mexican American families often tend to view the academic development of the student as a function of the school ... [and] that the role of the home and school should not interfere with each other.’”<sup>xii</sup> This reflects a cultural difference that Mexican-American parents have, based on their experiences of schooling in their home country. For them, the school is where activities take place, and the parents’ domain is that of the home, not to interfere with school, although this is not how parental involvement is viewed in most school environments in the United States.



Essentially there is a “mismatch between their expectations and those of the school...[and] these perspectives ...often are not heard or understood. Parents frequently feel intimidated by teachers, and teachers may give up trying to reach and engage parents across the cultural divide.”<sup>xiii</sup> This leads to the next factor that contributes to parental involvement outcomes, which is school environment and welcome.

### ***School environment and welcome***

The environment of the school, specifically how welcoming the environment is to parents, is a crucial factor in determining how involved parents are in school-based activities, and also translates to home-based activities. Parents who regularly said their schools were welcoming and empowering showed higher levels of involvement than parents at other schools.<sup>xiv</sup> For parents that may already be deterred by other factors such as language differences, lack of knowledge of the education system, or negative experiences with education in their own lives, a school environment that is welcoming or not could be the determining factor in parental involvement. For parents who must carefully choose how to spend what little discretionary time they have due to work schedule and other life demands, a welcoming environment may help a parent make the decision to attend a school event. In a study of several Chicago elementary schools with a population of students that are both ethnically diverse and socio-economically disadvantaged, yet also academically high achieving, the school environment was very important, as notated from a parent survey.

One question stood out from the others. That question asked parents how often they felt that teachers and administrators welcomed and encouraged parents to be involved in the school. The modal response to this question was 4 (*always*),

suggesting that the schools spend a lot of time encouraging parents to get involved and making them feel welcome.<sup>xv</sup>

This quote shows that parents always felt welcomed and encouraged to be a part of the school, not just by students' individual teacher, but by administrators such as the principal and vice-principal.

Pomerantz goes into more detail about ways that schools can create an empowering and welcoming environment for parents, above and beyond telling them they are welcomed in the school. One of the ways is to give parents the tools to advocate for and have control over their child's academic well-being by providing them with information and knowledge about their children's learning and giving chances to experience successful control. One other way for parents to feel welcome is to focus involvement through creating an environment where the emphasis is on the process of learning and less on the outcome. Therefore parents can become involved in the process but not feel solely responsible for the outcome. One crucial piece is to focus interventions on the positive affect of parental involvement in different ways, such as highlighting a child's progress over time instead of comparing to other students.<sup>xvi</sup> Improving the outcome of higher student achievement is the goal, but parents are probably more likely to take chances and be more involved if their efforts are welcomed. As the relationship is built, more emphasis could gradually be placed on directly relating some activities to the outcomes. These three methods of interaction highlight how creating a positive environment can translate into a welcoming one, developing parental confidence and showing the importance of parent interaction with the school.

One of the most important parts of feeling welcome is to feel invited. Invitations can be by one individual to the entire parent population, or from one individual to another. A principal's role in school climate can serve a critical role. The principal is the one who has to make the effort to meet the needs of all school members—parents, faculty, staff, and students—in order to show that the needs of all are important. Principals should also make regular visits to classrooms, and be a *consistent* advocate in the public domain for improvements.<sup>xvii</sup> Invitations from one individual to one family may prove more effective, however. The two individuals who have the most impact when making invitations are the teacher of the child and the individual child.

School environment can be a determining positive factor that encourages parents to make the time to be involved; it can also be a deciding factor in whether or not parents even make the effort or believe it will make a difference. When discussing language and culture in the previous section, one parent said that he or she had attended a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, but left due to all of the meeting being in English, a language that the parent did not understand. The parent did not feel welcome, and no accommodations were made for language differences. Even if this school had said the words of welcome, the environment did not support the words. School welcome is more than just paying lip service to the idea, but rather requires actions that parents can interpret. Even if the words of welcome are not said, many schools still have a welcoming environment based on actions and other visible signs to parents. Other schools often do not realize that parents do not feel welcome and are therefore serving as a deterrent to greater parental involvement. Epstein (the same who developed the framework), reported in 1993 that “teacher invitations and school programs to encourage

involvement were the strongest predictors of home-and school-based involvement in the elementary and middle schools.”<sup>xviii</sup> The same study strongly advocated for a teacher invitation that would encourage home time spent on homework that would lead to improved student performance. An invitation from the child can be from the child himself, or encouraged by the teacher. One caveat for invitations: the invitation to involvement is most often effective when it is for a specific, targeted action, for an activity that parents feel is within his or her ability to successfully complete.<sup>xix</sup>

A positive school environment that values parent interaction and input begins with not just a verbal welcome, but individual attention by teachers and other school personnel, and must be reinforced with actions that demonstrate the given welcome. No matter how welcoming the school environment, one factor that interacts with all others discussed so far is how capable parents feel in accomplishing the given task. This is called self-efficacy.

### ***Self-efficacy and parental educational experience***

In order for effort to be put forth toward a goal, it is necessary for the individual making the effort to have belief that the outcome is within his or her control, based on the type and amount of effort and activity put forth to achieve the goal. This is true of parents as well. If a parent does not believe that his or her actions in regard to a child’s education will make a difference or change a result, the likelihood of said parent to participate and become involved is very slim. Utilizing a term from Bandura’s research, the word to describe this is “self-efficacy,” i.e. “belief in one’s abilities to act in ways that will produce desired outcomes.”<sup>xx</sup> If a parent has high self-efficacy in regard to his or her child’s educational outcomes, then that parent is much more likely to take advantage of

opportunities for involvement given other beneficial factors. If a parent has low self-efficacy in regard to educational outcomes for his or her child, then even with beneficial factors of welcoming environment and ability to converse with teachers, said parent will likely make a decision to not become more involved.

Parents must believe that they can make a difference in the educational attainment of their children in order to become more involved, or they will generally not see being involved as a good use of time if their efforts will not make a difference. In one study of high achieving Chicago schools that were majority low-income and at-risk students, the parents were asked what impact they believed their involvement had on the education of their children. Forty-two percent of the parents responded with an affirmative descriptor such as “big, large, strong, great, significant, or huge.” Other parents provided more details of specific results that were all also positive, such as providing encouragement to succeed and letting them know that education is important and the parents care about the success of their children.<sup>xxi</sup> These parents display high levels of self-efficacy through their responses to this question. They participate in their child’s education and are involved in various ways because they believe that their efforts have a “big, large, strong, great, significant, or huge” impact on student achievement.

While the student’s educational success, the time allotted for participation, the welcome of the school, or the language of the parent may all have an impact on parental self-efficacy, two of the most influential factors seems to be the parent’s own experience with schooling and knowledge of the school system. Knowledge of the school system was included in the discussion of cultural differences, where a parent’s own experience with schooling was that the school was the authority on education and the parent’s

position was to maintain the home. If this is the view a parent has, then a parent will not believe it is appropriate to question the school or become more involved due to the school being the “expert.” Additionally, if the parent has had negative experiences with schooling, regardless of effort put forth in his or her own life, it is much more likely that this will translate into ambivalence toward effort and involvement in his or her own child’s life. For example, parent help with homework tends to decline as children move from the lower grades into middle and high school. The decline occurs as the subjects and curriculum that the students are covering moves toward and above the level of the parent’s knowledge, so the parent no longer feels that assisting with the work will have an impact on the outcome of the work the student performs.<sup>xxii</sup> Many parents who have not succeeded in school, who dropped out of high school, do not have positive experiences with education. Their efforts did not lead to success, and they have low self-efficacy which translates into less emphasis on success in school and involvement with their own children. Both negative experiences and low education levels have a large impact on the self-efficacy of the parent and the decision to be involved.

One concrete manner to increase parents’ self-efficacy is to offer concrete ways for parents to help in a home-based environment. The home is already the domain of the parents, and they will tend to feel the most comfortable and self-confident there; giving specific, targeted ways for them to be involved with student learning will increase the likelihood of success, which over time and repeated experiences with success, should result in an increased level of self-efficacy in relation to student achievement. An example of this targeted focus at home would be if a student needs assistance on reading, the teacher could show the parent how to read with their child through workshops, with

the child there as well, so that they can have concrete skills to apply in a specific area, not just a general “please help your child at home.” This type of workshop should always begin with praise and acknowledgement of what parents already do in the home for their children. Many parents already read to their students, or help to develop the underlying skills necessary for academic success. Sometimes it is just a matter of providing a manner to integrate several minutes of activity directly related to school concepts into the every day occurrences of home life. Every family goes to the store to buy food and other necessities. If teachers provided ideas on how to spend a minute at the store asking the child about prices, this is an activity that busy parents could provide integrated into the every day real activities of the home. The goal is not to replace what is already being done, but to supplement with activities based on the methods at school, so that home activities relate in a more direct manner to school curriculum.

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<sup>i</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, “Percentage of students enrolled in grades 3-12 whose parents were involved in various ways with their children’s schools, by public school type: 1993, 1996, 1999, 2003, and 2007,” under “Trends in the Use of School Choice: 1993 to 2007,” , NCES 2010-004, 2010, U.S. Department of Education, Washington D.C., Table 9, [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/2010/2010004/tables/table\\_9.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/2010/2010004/tables/table_9.asp) (accessed October 13, 2010).

<sup>ii</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, “Table 23: Percentage of elementary and secondary school children whose parents were involved in school activities, by selected child, parent, and school characteristics: 1993, 2003, and 2007,” *Digest of Education Statistics*, August 2008, U.S. Department of Education, Washington D.C., [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09\\_023.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_023.asp) (accessed October 13, 2010).

<sup>iii</sup> Data from Table 23, as shown under endnote ii. Please see citation for more information.

<sup>iv</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, “Table 20: Percentage distribution of public schools reporting selected percentages of parents or guardians that attended an open house or back-to-school night or regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, by selected school characteristics: School year 2003-04,” *School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS)*, 2004, U.S. Department of Education, Washington D.C., [http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs/tables/all\\_2004\\_tab\\_20.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs/tables/all_2004_tab_20.asp) (accessed October 13, 2010).

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey et al., “Why Do Parents Become Involved? Research Findings and Implications,” *The Elementary School Journal* 106, no. 2 (2005): 115, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/family-school/papers/Hoover-Dempsey2005.pdf> (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>vii</sup> Dolores C. Peña, “Parent Involvement: Influencing Factors and Implications”, *The Journal of Educational Research*, 94 no. 1 (2000): 44, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220670009598741> (accessed September 27, 2010).

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- <sup>viii</sup> See Table 23 listed in endnote ii for more information, or table 4.
- <sup>ix</sup> Peña, 47.
- <sup>x</sup> Irene M. Zoppi and Martin L. Johnson, *Latino Parental Involvement in Student School Attendance and Achievement*, pp. 64-81, <http://www.education.umd.edu/mimaue/documents/publications/latpareinvstd.pdf> (accessed July 2010).
- <sup>xi</sup> Peña, 51.
- <sup>xii</sup> Peña, 44.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Janet H. Chrispeels and Elvia Rivera, "Engaging Latino Families for Student Success: How Parent Education Can Reshape Parents' Sense of Place in the Education of Their Children," *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76 no. 2 (2001): 120, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15327930pje7602\\_7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15327930pje7602_7) (accessed September 27, 2010).
- <sup>xiv</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, 110-111.
- <sup>xv</sup> Melissa Ingram, Randi B. Wolfe, and Joyce M. Lieberman, "The Role of Parents in High-Achieving Schools Serving Low-Income, At-Risk Populations," *Education and Urban Society*, 39 no. 4 (August 2007): 486, <http://eus.sagepub.com/content/39/4/479> (accessed September 27, 2010).
- <sup>xvi</sup> Pomerantz, 400.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, 111.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xix</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, 112.
- <sup>xx</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, 108.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Ingram, 489.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, 115.



## **Chapter 4: School as Avenue of Implementation**

### **VIGNETTES OF DIFFERENT PARENT PROGRAMS**

In the majority of this report regarding parental involvement and student achievement, the importance of parental involvement, the impact on students, and the factors that affect parental involvement have been discussed. One of the most revealing means of analyzing and making recommendations for programs is to examine different programs and the components of each program. In this section, details are provided from two specific programs, one designed when a new principal began his tenure at an urban elementary school, and a district-wide program. Each of these cases occurs in schools and districts that have high-need populations with parents who often have many different barriers to more parental involvement. The elementary school case is taken from a larger article on parent involvement and the school district description is obtained primarily from online resources.

#### ***O'Hearn Elementary School***

O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston, Massachusetts began its comprehensive parental involvement plan after a new principal took over the campus and a survey of the teachers indicated that low levels of parental involvement were of primary concern. This campus had a student population with 67 percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 66 percent were minority students.<sup>lxxviii</sup> After the implementation of the parent involvement program, parental involvement rates, with parents being involved in at least one way or other, were above 90 percent. A family involvement committee was formed with parents that were representative of the diverse school population, parents identified by teachers as possible leaders. This committee began to meet regularly, and from this committee the parent involvement program grew; parents also became actively engaged

in school governance through a program in Boston's school system. The most important components that developed are listed below.

- A family outreach program funded through a grant whose primary goal was to develop relationships with those parents who hardly ever made contact with the school. The manner in which they did this was through face to face contact to begin building the foundational relationships. The people on the outreach program group visited families at homes, including parents of each student new to the school. The result was that families who never interacted with the school became more involved.<sup>lxxix</sup>
- A Family Center was opened in a space in the school for parents to spend time and serve as a relationship building space. It was an informal space that later became utilized by parents and other members of the school community (such as teachers) for special events. The space also had information about services and events for parents.
- A family newsletter, a leadership team, and other projects branched off from the outreach program, but one of the most important “program components” was the creation of a culture that included every parent in whatever fashion they were involved. It was a “climate where all families, in whatever way they could, were encouraged to be active members of the school community.”<sup>lxxx</sup>
- The school placed an emphasis on building relationships with parents in a process that has three steps: welcoming, honoring, and connecting. First parents were welcomed into the school, then their participation was honored, and then connections were built upon the common focused thread of the children and their learning.<sup>lxxxi</sup> This process created a sense of belonging and parents began to feel like part of the school family.

This parental involvement plan was developed through a need seen by the teachers, but it was envisioned through effort and action, directed and shaped by parents of the students. Many of the aspects of this program can be implemented at other schools, tailored to the individual needs of a campus. One of the largest reasons for its success is probably because a program for parents was not developed externally, but with measurable involvement and authority from the parents themselves.

### ***Austin Independent School District***

Austin Independent School District is a medium sized school district that is ethnically diverse and has many Title I campuses, those that have a sizeable portion of the student population that is eligible for free or reduced price lunch. I work as a teacher at one of these campuses. While each individual campus does not have a parental involvement program, the school district does have a Parental Support Office. In the words of the official website of the office, it “works to develop opportunities for parents and families [to] become more involved in the education of their children.”<sup>lxxxii</sup> The work of the Parent Support Office include providing workshops for parents focused on academics and leadership; providing AISD schools with connections and support for parental involvement; providing support for successful Parent Teacher Associations at schools; and supporting 75 parent support specialists assigned to Title 1 schools through training and development.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> The website maintains an online calendar of events and other resources for parents.

The Parent Support Specialist position is the core of the office, the personal resource for each school campus that serves as the connection for parents to the resources of the district. The Parent Support Specialist works in the individual schools, providing training for parents on different issues and to develop leadership, conducts outreach and home visits, training sessions for parents and school staff, and works with mentors and

tutors. This position is “parents' and families' connections to their children's schools. They work to provide parent workshops, leadership development and referrals to area resources for our school families.”<sup>lxxxiv</sup> According to the job description, the primary expectations for the parent support specialist are to: 1) conduct outreach and serve as a liaison for families; 2) organize and/or conduct sessions for families and school staff; 3) develop parent leaders; 4) participate in all scheduled professional development; and 5) document and submit all program data.<sup>lxxxv</sup> The primary areas that relate directly to parent involvement are conducting outreach and serving as a liaison between parents and the school, conducting information sessions to educate families, and developing parent leaders. The development of parent leaders includes giving sessions on campus and connecting parents with current district initiatives.

These parent support specialists work at schools that are Title 1 schools that have over 40% economically-disadvantaged students. According to research and findings in this report, outreach, forming relationships, and conducting education sessions are probably the most useful parts of the parent support specialist. In observing the many duties of this position, not all are directly related to parent involvement.

As stated above, the Parent Support Office has a calendar of events for parents, which is primarily online. However, upon clicking on the calendar, very few events are scheduled, so this is not an aspect of the office that is being utilized very much. Additionally, although the calendar is not specifically targeted to the Title I schools, it is most likely not particularly useful for these families. By definition these schools have a large percentage of families that are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and most likely do not have computers at home or convenient access to the internet. If they do, they may not have knowledge of how to get to the website or navigate the pages. Many of the same schools that are higher need also have a large population of English Language

Learners, whose parents do not speak English. As a staff member that has worked in one of the Austin ISD Title 1 schools that has a parent support specialist, the position is often subject to the demands of the school and district, which may not allow the greatest utilization as a support to the parents. While the primary responsibility of the Parent Support Specialist is to develop and maintain relationships, the ability of each campus-based position can vary greatly based on the other demands of the campus. What is crucial is that this position is campus-based, where relationships with parents are most likely to be developed to increase parental involvement and support.

These two descriptions of different programs offer a concrete look at implementation of parental involvement and engagement programs of two different types. Ideas for implementation and means of improvement can be found within the descriptions of the O'Hearn Elementary and Austin Independent School district program models.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This professional report has shown that parental involvement as a means of increasing student academic achievement is a policy issue worthy of examination, from the federal level to the school level, and every one in between. The evidence clearly indicates that parental involvement is an important method of targeting student achievement, in coordination with other factors such as teacher quality, funds funneled toward education, and the capacity of the education system to address the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The impact of parental involvement on different measurements of student achievement and the factors that influence parental involvement activities are detailed, as well. The common link in every section has been the importance of coordination between the school and parents in order to better facilitate involvement for greater academic achievement of the students. Schools cannot simply

develop a parental involvement plan without the input of the parents and parents cannot become involved in the academic lives of their children without considering the demands of the schools and developing a better understanding of the system. The audience of this report is schools and individual school personnel, specifically administrators and teachers. While policy can be written at the federal and state levels, implementation is usually directed at the local level. Parental involvement is inherently a relationship building exercise and most successful programs develop from the individual school campus. The policy recommendations in this section are geared toward individual campus and/or teacher implementation, based on what seems to be the most effective and would yield the highest results, while taking into account practical restrictions on campuses in the current environment of fiscal and staff limits and cutbacks that each school district faces. While the school cannot change socio-economic status, educational background of the parents, or work schedules, there are many different options for school personnel to consider when striving to increase parental involvement quantity and quality.

The school and the personnel that work within each individual school campus have the opportunity to make the most impact on parental involvement and student academic achievement. Teachers and administrators on each campus know the students, the parents, and the climate of the school better than any school district, state, or federal government body. The recommendations below are aimed at being implemented within this context, at a local level that develops individual relationships. They serve to overcome barriers and ensure not just higher levels of parental involvement, but also better quality interaction between school, student, and parent. One parent involved at a time makes one more student more successful, which builds to a campus level achievement.

### ***Ensure welcome through invitation***

There is no better way to demonstrate that parents are welcome within the walls of the school than to issue an invitation. Many parents do not become involved in school-based activities because they do not feel that they are welcome unless specifically invited to attend an event or conference. Research shows that if parents feel that it is necessary to attend, the majority of the time they do so. This is why parental involvement tends to be highest for back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences; specific invitations are usually issued for these events. Therefore, school administrators and teachers, particularly, should ensure that they issue an invitation to each and every parent to become more involved in the school, that their participation is welcomed. The principal can issue an invitation on back-to-school night and whenever he or she comes into contact with parents. As parental involvement is most successful where relationships exist, studies have shown that an invitation from the teacher is especially effective. One of the “most simple, yet most powerful, recommendation[s] was ‘make the parent feel more welcome.’”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

In order for this recommendation to be implemented and be of value, teachers must make sure that they really do welcome parents into the classroom and do not feel threatened by this involvement. This may take time and education, but the majority of the time the parents can serve as a resource for teachers to better understand their students. Teachers and administrators can begin to change the school environment through issuing an invitation to parents to feel welcome inside the walls of their children’s school. Best of all, the impact of an invitation does not cost money.

### ***Increase parental self-efficacy***

One of the most instrumental focuses that parent involvement programs and school staff can develop is a way to increase parents' sense of self-efficacy. In layman's terms, effort should be placed on developing methods that help parents see that they can make a difference on academic achievement through their actions. Many parents believe that they do not make a difference because they do not have formal education and are not confident in their ability to help their children with homework. In their own experience with education, effort put forth may not have resulted in success. To overcome these barriers and increase sense of self-efficacy, parents will then believe they make a difference and are more likely to be involved and persist in the face of challenges. Increasing parental self-efficacy is not a one step process; it requires a strong foundation and feedback from school staff and their children that their actions do in fact make a difference. Providing evidence of that, whether through visual charts of improvement, verbal feedback, or another method is absolutely necessary to allow for incremental growth in a parent's sense of self-efficacy in regard to a child'

One concrete manner to increase parents' self-efficacy is to offer concrete ways for parents to help in a home-based environment. The home is already the domain of the parents, and they will tend to feel the most comfortable and self-confident there; giving specific, targeted ways for them to be involved with student learning will increase the likelihood of success, which over time and repeated experiences with success, should result in an increased level of self-efficacy in relation to student achievement. An example of this targeted focus at home would be if a student needs assistance on reading, the teacher could show the parent how to read with their child through workshops, with



the child there as well, so that they can have concrete skills to apply in a specific area, not just a general “please help your child at home.” This type of workshop should always begin with praise and acknowledgement of what parents already do in the home for their children. The goal is not to replace what is already being done, but to supplement with activities based on the methods at school, so that home activities relate in a more direct manner to school curriculum. Increasing self-efficacy will take time and ongoing communication with parents. Once parents realize that they can make a difference, this confidence may transfer into other forms of parental involvement, such as volunteering or attendance at other school events.

### ***Develop extended family resources***

One of the key facets of parental involvement is not just that a parent is involved in the life of their child, but that someone who has time and cares is spending time with a child. It does not always have to be a parent, but can also be another family member or person who is committed to developing a relationship with a particular child. This is the reason that mentor relationships are promoted and programs like Big Brother/Big Sister are successful. Building on this idea and the fact that many families have strong bonds with members outside the immediate family, one recommendation is that schools foster the resources that the entire family and community have to offer for the children at the school.

Many elementary school children have siblings that attend the same school and could work together to develop academic skills and hold each other accountable for learning, in addition to or in the absence of strong parental involvement. If parents work, grandparents or aunts often take care of the children after school. Encouraging parents to

have an ongoing dialog with other members of the family, so that they understand the importance of education, effort, and completion of homework would be a step forward. Other family members can serve as resources to develop the knowledge of parents. For parents that are new to a particular school or are immigrants that have family who have been in the U.S. for a longer period of time, these family members can give information. In one study, when parents “believed their skills were inadequate, parents tended to ask other in the family to help, ask the child to get more information at school, or seek additional help themselves.”<sup>xxxvii</sup> These relationships that are strong should be encouraged, and teachers can develop this knowledge base by providing information to parents and working with the teachers of siblings in the school.

***Highlight the many different avenues of parent involvement***

Parents are involved with their children in ways that affect academic achievement every day. Every time a parent makes sure their children are fed, have a roof over their head, or ask them how they are doing, a parent is involved. Teachers can build self-efficacy for parents by acknowledging the many different ways that parents can be involved in their children’s lives; this is especially important for parents who feel that they cannot help their children with their schoolwork because of their limited education. Parents can develop many of the core skills that children need to be successful by interacting with them outside of the academic coursework. Examples of factors and activities that teachers can emphasize include the importance of talking every day with your child about school and life in general; showing interest in what is happening at school and actively listening; create stories and answer questions; have a positive attitude and emphasize the importance of education and always making the best effort possible.

These types of activities are things that all parents can do, regardless of education level or language spoken at home.

***Allow time for staff to develop strong relationships with parents and plan***

This recommendation is aimed at principals and administrators, as well as school district level personnel. Developing relationships with parents in order to better understand families and students, and have the interactions within which to advocate for stronger parental involvement takes time. It also takes careful consideration of the students and families, and the goals that each teacher or school wants to nurture. Just as schools and school districts have professional development and planning time allocated throughout the year for curriculum and classroom management, time must be allocated for parent involvement and management. If parents are involved in the academic lives of their children, they can help students grow through many different avenues, and in conjunction with the student and the teacher, provide a stronger foundation for student academic achievement. “Schools may ...empower teachers for involvement by making parental involvement a routine part of staff thinking and planning.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> When parental involvement encouragement and practice becomes embedded in school culture and time is allotted for planning, teachers know that it is an important goal, and real change and dialog can occur between and within schools and parents.

***Ask the parents***

It may seem self-explanatory; in order to promote stronger parental involvement at the school level, the schools should include parents in the conversation. However, many programs are developed for groups without consulting the future participants themselves. So many different variables exist that determine why and how parents are

involved that the most crucial voice that should be heard is those of the parents. When school personnel better understand the needs of the parents and students, from their own voices, the program or plan can only be stronger, if it is developed with those needs and wants at the center.

Many different methods are available to collect data, from surveys to interviews during activities already scheduled, such as parent teacher conferences. Each school or teacher will need to utilize available resources within the constraints of each campus, but it is extremely important that the voices of the parents be considered when programs are developed.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

While many programs exist or are being planned to increase the quantity and quality of parental involvement, it is not always necessary for every campus to have a comprehensive plan in order for parental involvement to increase. The recommendations above could be pulled together to formulate a school-wide plan to increase parental involvement, or an individual teacher can utilize the recommendations as a framework to consider the parental involvement of individual families in his or her own classroom. Especially within the fiscal and time limitations of the current school climate, the recommendations are ones that do not require a large investment of funds. Each relationship between school, parent, and child made stronger will provide a link upon which to make the chain stronger and make higher student achievement a realizable goal.

The recommendations in this chapter focus on improving the relationship between teachers and other school personnel and the parents, as these relationships form the foundation upon which to build a strong parental involvement program. While it seems

like common sense that parents being involved in their children's lives should lead to higher student achievement, the exact types of activities that make the most difference is not as clear, and will differ based on the needs of the individual school campuses and classrooms. The majority of studies and research investigations, both quantitative and qualitative, suggest that a positive relationship between parental involvement and student achievement does in fact exist. The research also indicates that the time spent is not the most important facet of parental involvement, but rather the quality of the time spent in activity and how the parents interact with their children. Parental activity should emphasize effort, be productive and affective, and strive to link activity in the home with school curriculum. Therefore, a strong parental involvement program will not focus solely on increasing time spent in activity, but rather deal with how the activity is performed to obtain the most benefit. This is crucial given the increasing time constraints and every day demands on families today; parents simply have less time to devote, so the activities must consider these restrictions and be designed to actually accomplish the most quality in less time. They must also be culturally relevant and targeted to the needs of the student and parent population.

This master's report focuses primarily on parental involvement to improve student achievement at the elementary school level, based on the belief that the elementary level is the basis for all other levels of educational attainment and future endeavors in life. Literacy as the means of student achievement is emphasized because reading is necessary in all aspects of education, and good reading and analytical skills are an absolute necessity. The majority of the sources used in this report were case studies, reviews of other literature, or correlational studies. As indicated in the 2002 synthesis of parent

involvement regarding the general trends in research of parental involvement, there are “current limitations of this field of research. This means that there are few experimental or quasi-experimental studies and many of the studies represent quite small samples.”<sup>lxxxix</sup> While case studies and small sample quantitative analysis can provide some insight into the complex relationship between parental involvement and student achievement, this relationship interplays among many other contexts. What is necessary in order to better understand the relationship these two have with each other is further experimental and quasi-experimental analysis with larger sample sizes. The effectiveness of specific interventions could also be included with a larger sample size and control groups to provide a better isolation of particular contexts or program actions. As school districts and individual schools are faced with tough choices on how to devote limited funds, time, and effort in the current economy, policy and program decisions must be based on strong and sound evidence. Further studies meeting the criteria above that may provide a more quantitative base of evidence that supplements the many qualitative case studies as to where resources should go will be necessary. Current literature and research support policy decisions that utilize parental involvement as a part of programs to facilitate student achievement. The keys are to increase quantity and quality of parental involvement where there was a lack previously, building upon the relationships at the classroom level.

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<sup>lxxviii</sup> Karen L. Mapp, “Having Their Say: Parents Describe Why and How They are Engaged in Their Children’s Learning,” 2002, pg. 37, <http://www.peoriatitlei.org/dist150/documents/Article.pdf> (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>lxxix</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>lxxx</sup> Ibid.

<sup>lxxxi</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> Austin Independent School District, *Parent Support Office*, [http://www.austinisd.org/academics/parentsinfo/parent\\_involvement/](http://www.austinisd.org/academics/parentsinfo/parent_involvement/) (accessed November 1, 2010).

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Austin Independent School District, “Parent Support Specialists,” *Parent Support Office*, [http://www.austinisd.org/academics/parentsinfo/parent\\_involvement/specialists.phtml](http://www.austinisd.org/academics/parentsinfo/parent_involvement/specialists.phtml), (accessed November 1, 2010).

<sup>lxxxv</sup> Parent Support Office, *Parent Support Specialist-Major Duties & Key Performance Indicators 2009-10*, Austin Independent School District, Austin, TX, 2009,

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[http://www.austinisd.org/academics/docs/parents/PSS\\_Major\\_Duties\\_and\\_KPIs\\_Nov\\_09.doc](http://www.austinisd.org/academics/docs/parents/PSS_Major_Duties_and_KPIs_Nov_09.doc) (accessed November 1, 2010).

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Dolores C. Peña, “Parent Involvement: Influencing Factors and Implications”, *The Journal of Educational Research*, 94 no. 1 (2000): 52, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220670009598741> (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, 115.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, 115.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Henderson and Mapp, 5.

## Appendix: Methods and Background of Studies

Title, Author, and date of publication	<i>Parent Involvement: Influencing Factors and Implications</i> -Dolores C. Peña -2000
Research Method	Qualitative
Method of selection or source of data	A school district in Texas in a large urban city with at least 70 percent Mexican American students, 7 sites were given by the school district. One elementary school with a large concentration of Mexican American families, in a community in Texas.
Sample Size	4 out of 31 classrooms were selected, 2 prekindergarten/kindergarten and 2 third/fourth grade level. There was one English and one Spanish for each level.
Survey or data collection method	A case study method was used. This included home visits, attendance at parent meetings, informal discussions, and formal interviews.
Dates	1995
Method Used to produce the estimates	n/a
Factors controlled for	The researcher chose classrooms with both language families in order to get a better sample, and primary and intermediate classes in order to evaluate differences based on grade level.
Source	UU <a href="http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/281374_782751595_920803848.pdf">http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/281374_782751595_920803848.pdf</a>

Title, Author, and date of publication	Why Do Parents Become Involved? Research Findings and Implications -Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey, et. al. -2005
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Research Method	Literature review
Method of selection or source of data	Studies that were published recently were chosen for the literacy review, based on constructs that refer to why parents become involved in the education of their children.
Sample Size	n/a
Survey or data collection method	n/a
Dates	n/a
Method Used to produce the estimates	n/a
Factors controlled for	n/a
Source	

Title, Author, and date of publication	<i>Family Involvement in School and Low-Income Children's Literacy: Longitudinal Associations Between and Within Families</i> --Eric Dearing, Holly Kreider, Sandra Simpkins, and Heather B. Weiss --2007
Research Method	Quantitative
Method of selection or source of data	The data was taken from an impact evaluation of the Comprehensive Child Development Program and a school Transition Study. The program was a federally funded for early intervention.
Sample Size	403 were in the original data set. 281 were included in the study because they had observation for variables measured longitudinally and a complete data set.
Survey or data collection method	Longitudinal correlation study
Dates	Data was obtained prior to 1995.

Method Used to produce the estimates	Multilevel models of analysis were used to obtain estimates of individual growth curves for literacy performance K-5. Multiple steps were used. Many were also re-estimated. (See page 657 of publication for specific details.
Factors controlled for	Differences in children were controlled for with half of the children being randomly assigned for services and half to a control group.
Source	

Title, Author, and date of publication	<i>Having Their Say: Parents Describe Why and How They are Engaged in Their Children's Learning</i> -Karen L. Mapp -2002
Research Method	Qualitative
Research Site	Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston, MA
Method of selection or source of data	The school was chosen because it has an active family engagement program and it has a diverse student background, ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically.
Sample Size	18 parents were interviewed individually. The school site had approximately 220 students.
Survey or data collection method	The case study utilized school site observations, analysis of relevant data, and school personnel interviews. The most in-depth part was one-on-one interviews with a group of parents, averaging two to three hours each. Memos, field notes, and interview transcripts were analyzed.
Dates	Interviews took place from 1996 to 1998.
Method Used to produce the estimates	n/a
Factors controlled for	The school was chosen because it was diverse on many different levels, to control for differences in background.
Source	<a href="http://www.peoriatitlei.org/dist150/documents/Article.pdf">http://www.peoriatitlei.org/dist150/documents/Article.pdf</a>

Title, Author, and date of publication	<i>The How, Whom, and Why of Parents' Involvement in Children's Academic Lives: More is Not Always Better</i> --Eva M. Pomerantz, Elizabeth A. Moorman and Scott D. Litwack --2007
Research Method	Literature Review
Method of selection	n/a
Sample Size	n/a
Survey or data collection method	Analysis of literature
Dates	n/a
Method Used to produce the estimates	n/a
Factors controlled for	n/a
Source	<a href="http://rer.sagepub.com/content/77/3/373">http://rer.sagepub.com/content/77/3/373</a>

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## **Vita**

Jennifer Haldeman was born in Colorado, moved with her family several times, and graduated from Graham High School in Bluefield, Virginia. She attended Florida State University, graduating in 2001 with a B.A. in International Affairs and B.A. in Spanish. She then worked for several years, and moved to Austin, Texas to pursue her Master's degree at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, focusing on education policy. Along the way she studied in Mexico for a semester. She has taught bilingual 2<sup>nd</sup> grade for the past 3 years in central Texas and plans to continue teaching and education policy.

Email: [mysteryjlh@yahoo.com](mailto:mysteryjlh@yahoo.com)

This report was typed by Jennifer L. Haldeman